



Smart Cookie Club
S T A Y • P L A Y • L E A R N

The Natural World

Activity Pack

Exploring nature through play is an important part of cognitive development and an easy way to spend quality time with your child and family.

Nature provides countless opportunities for discovery, creativity, problem-solving, and other foundations of education. Interacting with natural environments allows children to experiment with ideas, question, and make hypotheses ~ thereby developing their inquisitive minds.

When children play outdoors they also increase important physical skills such as the ability to balance, jump, climb, throw, run and skip.

Practice patience and math skills, learn how to plan and organize, engage all five senses, encourage healthy eating, enhance fine motor development, explore science, learn responsibility and inspire environmental stewardship with these simple play-based activities.

[A short video for parents and caregivers.](#)

Click the titles below to follow the circle-time links

Hello Song

Dancing Bubbles Experiment

Coloured Leaves Experiment

Ice Puzzle

GET OUTSIDE AND HAVE SOME FUN LEARNING THROUGH PLAY WITH SMART COOKIE CLUB TODAY!

Introduce the topic by sprouting some seeds!

Materials Needed: Paper towel, small ziplock bag, seeds (sprouts & beans are recommended but try to use what you have available).

Activity Instructions:

1. Invite your child to examine one of the seeds, asking some thought provoking questions such as “Where does the plant come from?”
2. Fold the paper towel in half and place the seed between the two halves.
3. Place the paper towel and seeds into the ziplock bag and moisten the paper towel with a small amount of water (you don’t want to drown the seed).
4. Seal the ziplock bag and tape to a window.
5. Watch the seed grow over time, discussing the changes each day.



Extend the activity by planting your sprouted seed into a pot or the garden. Older children can chart and record their findings as the seed grows. Take photos of your seed’s progress to look back on and compare to.



Questions and conversation during this activity:

- “What do you think will happen to the seed?”
- “How many plants will grow from these two seeds?”
- “Let’s try to grow it as tall as we can. How tall do you think it will get?”

Keep in mind your child’s skill level and make sure to set them up for success while challenging their abilities. Younger children may require careful supervision during activities. Suitable tasks for younger children may include watering plants and digging, while older children may be more physically capable of handling a greater variety of activities such as carrying, mulching and pruning.

Making Marks & Letters In The Sand (Literacy)

Materials Needed: Sand or muddy area (or make a sand tray in your sensory bin), stick, rocks, marker, basket.

Activity Instructions:

1. Gather rocks or stones in your basket.
2. Make letters on your rocks or stones using your marker.
3. Use your stick to make marks and form letters in the sand.
4. Choose a letter rock from the basket and then use your stick to form that letter in the sand.



Younger children can focus on making curves and lines.

Older children can play a game; simply choose a letter rock from the basket and then use your stick to make the matching upper or lower-case letter in the sand.

Finding Colours (Literacy):

Materials Needed: Cardboard square, coloured markers, scissors.

Activity Instructions:

- 1. Draw a picture of a truck on the cardboard square using your markers. (Otherwise you can draw a flower, an animal or anything of interest to your child).
- 2. Use your scissors to cut out the truck bed (or flower center, animal body, etc.).
- 3. Label the drawing with the colour you would like your child to find. For example; ‘brown’. Younger children will need a visual, so use a brown marker to print the word ‘brown’, or a blue marker to print the word ‘blue’.
- 4. Invite your child to fill in their picture with different items in their natural environment. Perhaps you could find a brown tree trunk, brown wood chips, brown leaves, a brown fence, etc.



Make multiple cards - one for each colour your child is currently mastering.

Nature Sticky Wall (Language):

Materials Needed: Clear shelf liner, heavy tape (such as packing or duct tape), scissors, leaves and other natural items.

Activity Instructions:

- 1. Cut a large piece of the shelf liner and tape to the fence or wall with the sticky side facing out.
- 2. Invite your child to collect some natural materials such as leaves, grass, twigs and flowers.
- 3. Stick the items to the sticky surface area, discussing and naming the different items found.



You can keep this creation and display it for your child to reflect on the experience.

Sticky Wands (Language):

Materials Needed: Strong tape (such as packing or duct tape), sticks and other natural materials such as leaves and flowers.

Activity Instructions:

- 1. Wrap your tape backwards around your stick (with the sticky side facing outward). Leave the bottom part of the stick exposed as a handle for your child to hold onto.
- 2. Invite your child to make a nature wand by sticking some different items to their sticky stick.
- 3. Experiment and explore with what will stay stuck to your stick (that’s a mouthful!), discussing and naming the natural items.



Nature Puzzle (Math)

Materials Needed: Rocks and/or leaves, marker, paper, bowl or basket.

Activity Instructions:

1. Use your marker to trace each of your rocks/leaves onto the paper.
2. Place all of the rocks/leaves into a bowl or basket and invite your child to sort and match the different shapes and sizes.

For **younger children**, offer fewer rocks/leaves with very obvious differences. Increase the level of difficulty by adding more items with similar sizes and shapes.



Three in A Row (Math)

Materials Needed: 5 rocks, 5 pinecones, 4 short sticks.

*Substitute rocks and pinecones with leaves, flowers, or other natural items.

Activity Instructions:

1. Set up a tic-tac-toe board using your sticks.
2. Take turns with your child placing your items onto the board. Your child may be using the rocks, while you are using the pinecones.
3. Try to get 3 of your items in a row (either across, vertically or horizontally).



When playing with **younger children**, make sure to use simple language such as “my turn, your turn”, and focus on counting using one-to-one correspondance.

Snipping Grass & Leaves (Fine Motor)

Materials Needed: Egg carton, leaves and greenery, child-safe scissors.

Activity Instructions:

1. Use your scissors to make small holes in the center pieces of your egg carton.
2. Invite your child to collect some grass, leaves, and other greenery, giving them direction on what might be appropriate to pick.
3. Stick the greens into the holes on the egg carton.
4. Use your scissors to snip the greens.

By sticking the greens into the egg carton, they are held upright and the clippings are caught in the carton for easy clean-up!



Nature Sensory Bottles (Sensory)

Materials Needed: Plastic water bottle, natural materials (pinecones, acorns, leaves, flowers, twigs, etc.), water, strong tape.

Activity Instructions:

1. Invite your child to gather some natural items and place them in the empty water bottle.
2. Fill the bottle with water.
3. Place the lid and tape closed using strong tape (try using a glue gun if your child has mastered un-taping and opening bottle tops).



Shadow Tracing (Science)

Materials Needed: Paper, pencil (or markers, crayons, chalk), tape, a few favourite toys, sunshine or a lamp.

Activity Instructions:

1. Tape your paper to the table or surface.
2. Place your child’s toy at one end of the paper, casting a shadow towards the center of the paper.
3. Invite your child to use their pencil to trace around the edges of the shadow.

You can also do this activity on the sidewalk or paved surface using chalk. Try tracing each other’s shadows.

Younger children may not quite make the shape of the shadow with their pencil or crayon, but will focus on gripping the pencil and practicing mark making while exploring the science of shadows.

Start with simple objects such as blocks and work towards more complex figures such as toy animals.



Leafy Ice Cube Crush (Science)

Materials Needed: Leaves and/or flower petals, ice cube trays, a child-safe smashing tool (such as a wooden hammer for toddlers or a rock for older preschoolers).

Activity Instructions:

1. Fill an ice cube tray with water, leaves and/or flower petals.
2. Freeze.
3. Invite your child to use their hammer or rock to crush and smash the leafy cubes.



This activity also provides a positive and fun outlet for your child’s emotions.

Painting Pinecones (Creative):

Materials Needed: Paint, paint brushes, pinecones.

Activity Instructions:

1. Invite your child to use their paintbrush to paint the pinecones. Use different colours and get creative!

Remember the key to creative activities is focusing on process over product.

Try hanging these with fishing line from a tree, or use them for other activities and games.



OR

Marble Painting with Pinecones (Creative)

Materials Needed: Cardboard box, paper, tape, paint, pinecones.

Activity Instructions:

1. Tape your paper to the bottom of the cardboard box.
2. Squirt some paint on the paper and add the pinecones to the box.
3. Invite your child to shake and tilt the box to roll the pinecones through the paint and across the paper.
4. Look at and discuss the marks, designs, and mixing colours on the paper.



Inukshuks (Building):

Materials Needed: Stones or rocks.

Activity Instructions:

1. Collect some stones or rocks with your child.
2. Show your child a picture of an inukshuk and discuss inuit culture.
3. Invite your child to use the stones to build their own inukshuk.

Younger children may not yet be able to manipulate and build with large stones. Instead, try building and inukshuk on a flat surface using smaller stones.



Mud Kitchen (Cooperative Play):

Set up a mud kitchen for your child. It doesn't have to be fancy, children will use their imaginations to create as they explore through play. Mud kitchens can provide a whole variety of different learning opportunities including sensory, imaginative, creative, and exploratory play. Being outdoors also gives children the chance to connect and



learn about nature, to be creative and invent their own role-play games and can even allow opportunities for early math and science exploration.

- Needless to say, the primary ingredient required is mud. Children can use bagged topsoil, gravel, sand and water to make their own mud in a range of colours, textures, and consistencies. (Ensure the soil is not contaminated by animal feces).
- Dress your child in waterproof clothing, or a bathing suit and perhaps prepare for a bath after this activity.
- Use an outdoor kitchen unit, containers, pans and pots for mixing, as well as kitchen utensils.
- Use herbs, flower petals and grass to decorate mud pies.
- Pretend to buy and sell items from the mud kitchen.

Go ahead, get messy!



Outdoor Obstacle Course (Gross Motor - Movement)

Materials Needed: Items you already have at home. Use cardboard cutouts, pool noodles and tent pegs, wooden logs, cardboard boxes, skipping ropes, hula hoops, etc.

Activity Instructions:

1. Set up a course with your child.
2. Model the expected actions through the course.
3. Invite your child to race through the obstacles.

Crawl through the box, balance across the log, hop through the hoops, skip across the cardboard cutouts, climb over the tree stump, weave through the planters or plastic cups, zig zag along the rope, and so on.

Younger toddlers may begin with only 3 obstacles, while older children can add more complex movements. Play games going forwards and backwards through the course or time yourself and try to beat that time.

For young children, make a large obstacle course/fort using cardboard boxes. Simply open the ends of a few large boxes and connect them using duct tape. Cut holes (for crawling and looking through) using a safety knife or scissors before your child enters the box.



Nature Walk

Materials needed: Binoculars or a magnifying glass.

Activity Instructions:

Take time to connect as a family with a walk in nature. Bring a simple prop along such a home-made binoculars to keep your child engaged in exploring the natural world.



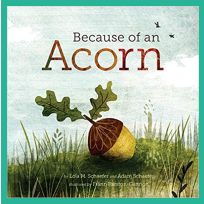
1. As you walk along, discuss the different things that you see, hear and smell. Use this opportunity to ask thought provoking, open-ended questions.
2. Invite your child to use their binoculars or magnifying glass to further investigate the topic of discussion.

Book Recommendations: (Click the titles below to follow the Amazon links)

[Plants Can't Sit Still - by: Rebecca E. Hirsch](#)

[Because of an Acorn - by: Lola and Adam Schaefer](#)

[The Hike - by: Allison Farrell](#)



We hope you have enjoyed these activities!
Please let us know if you have any comments or suggestions and feel free to share and tag us in your photos and stories!

Activity Pack created and produced by Mary Wolff
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LEARNING THROUGH PLAY WITH
Smart Cookie Club
EVERY DAY!